

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 A system and method for providing pluggable authentication and access control in
computer systems and services are described. The authentication and access control
process may be categorized into three components: an authentication protocol, a user
repository and an access control model. In one embodiment, the authentication and
access control mechanism may be implemented as three pluggable modules: an
10 authentication protocol handler module for the authenticator side, an authentication
protocol handler for the side to be authenticated, and an access control context module on
the authenticator side. The pluggable modules may be exchangeable to support a variety
of authentication types, user repositories, and access control models. The authentication
protocol handlers provide symmetrical methods to handle requests and responses in the
15 authentication process that reflect the symmetrical nature of the authentication process.